

A Christmas Message from Bishop Pederson



But the angel said to [the shepherds], “Do not be afraid; for see – I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!” When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.” So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. Luke 2:10-16

Apparently, the sudden appearance of an angel is beautiful and terrifying at the same time, because in nearly every biblical account where an angel’s glory is revealed, the first words spoken are, “Do not be afraid.” The angel assures the shepherds that rather than fear, they are about to hear good news and experience a great joy for all people. Born today in Bethlehem is a Savior, the Messiah. The sign that this is true is that they will find the Savior wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger. And after a multitude of angels give praise to God, the shepherds decide to have a look at what the Lord has revealed to them.

“Let us go . . . and see *this thing* . . .” They can’t even describe with words what will be revealed to them! Let us go, and see *this thing* which the Lord has made known to us.

Imagine walking through the hills that night to see *this thing*—still bedazzled by angel glory, amazed that the long awaited Messiah had been born, and blown away by a chorus of angels singing, “Glory to God in the highest.”

The walk wouldn’t have been too far—only a mile or two. And, they hiked right along because the account says that they went “with haste,” to see this promised child. So, hiking quickly, hearts pounding, puffing a bit, they still have the angel’s words echoing in their ears.

*This Christmas,
may we all
see this thing
from God,
the One of whom
the angels sing!*

And then they see. They see *this thing*. They see the sign—a child wrapped in cloth, lying in a manger, surrounded by Mary and Joseph.

Yes, it’s true!

The word from God via an angel is true!

The Savior is born!

Other than Mary and Jo-

seph, who are the first to gaze upon the Christ Child? Shepherds—ordinary folks, doing a lowly job, living mostly day to day, just trying to eke out a life for themselves and their families. We may not know much about tending sheep, but we understand these shepherds; for we are ordinary folks, just trying to get through life the best we can, too. And if God’s messenger came to ordinary shepherds, could not God come to the likes of us, too?

Most of us won’t quickly move across the hills of Bethlehem, breathless and sweaty in the night air; but peering into the manger and seeing God’s love for us leaves us breathless, too.

This Christmas, may we all see *this thing* from God, the One of whom the angels sing!

Bishop Duane Pederson
Northwest Synod of Wisconsin